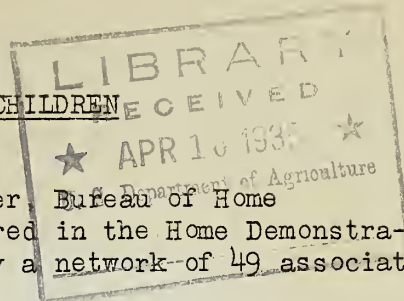


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MAKING THE HOME CONVENIENT FOR THE CHILDREN



A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Program, April 3, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

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How do you do, all of you!

I hope you aren't too tired of the phrase "new deal" because I'd like to apply it to my talk today. The new deal in making the home convenient for children received its first inspiration from the nursery schools started in this Country some ten or twelve years ago. Then came the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930, with one small group of child training specialists giving full attention to furniture and equipment that would fill the needs of small children. And now most of us who are mothers or child specialists are giving our homes the once-over to see just how we can make the smallest persons in our midst, comfortable and happy.

Let's start in the child's own room in this tour of the family house. Does the little tot of two or four or six have a place all his own for his clothes -- a place where he can reach them easily? Some low hooks in the closet or a pole hung low enough so he can lift the hangers off and put them on again makes him self-reliant, and happy in his sense of accomplishment. If you cannot spare closet space for this purpose, a simple open cupboard with perhaps a broom or mop handle cut down for a pole may provide an inexpensive kind of clothes cupboard. I recall so well the response of a tiny tot of two who was given such a place for his suits, sweaters, and other outer wraps about three years ago. His first impulse was to take everything out, every hanger off the pole, and every suit off its hanger. Sort of a game, you see. With a little supervision, he found it was just as absorbing though a little more difficult to get everything back, and after a few days he got the idea of using this cupboard as a place to keep his things, and to keep them in order.

A very simple toy shelf, made of two wide boards, each 45 inches long, and two uprights, each about 30 inches high, provided this same child with ample space for his carts, and blocks, and other play equipment for a year or two. When his assortment of toys changed in size and shape, three lemon crates placed on end close together and topped off by a wide board about 43 inches long, made an additional storage place for toys at very little cost. A toy cupboard of this kind made of lemon or orange crates is especially handy for keeping small toys, tea sets, and games in order, because of the six compartments it provides.

A low chest of drawers, about 28 or 30 inches high, or even a washstand, makes an ideal place for the little child to keep his or her undergarments, nighties, socks, and handkerchiefs. And the top of it can be used for the small ornamental toys like the favorite mickey mouse, a set of china dogs, or a vase of flowers, with which little tots so love to adorn their own rooms.

(over)

The family bathroom with its adult-size equipment can also be very easily arranged for the child's convenience. A tier of two or three steps, built to fit under or beside the wash bowl, makes it possible for even the two-year old to wash himself independently. And it is surprising how soon children of two or three years learn to wash themselves efficiently and without too much splashing, and to brush their teeth without supervision. A sturdy soap box which can be pushed out of the way when not in use, may take the place of specially constructed steps. The box, or the steps, can be painted to blend in with the bath-room; white, or ivory, or delft blue. The same steps or box or a small stool may be used beside the toilet seat. A ten-cent towel rack attached to the bathroom door, just low enough for short arms to reach, increases the small child's independence in the bathroom. He soon takes pride in hanging up his very own towel and wash cloth neatly when he has finished using them.

At times when the little child joins the family group in the living room, he is happier and so are his parents if a small chair or stool is in a handy place for his use. Some picture books and just a few toys in the lower shelf of the book case, give him something to occupy his attention while the big folks are listening to the radio, or engaging in conversation which he cannot enjoy.

But children must not spend all of their time indoors, no matter how well the house is equipped for their needs. So outside too, children's interests must have consideration. The old-fashioned rope swing, a chinning bar, a stationary ladder for climbing when there are no big trees, and a tricycle or something else to ride on, keep children out in the fresh air, exercising the big muscles that need to stretch and harden as they grow.

In these few minutes I have suggested some of the many simple, inexpensive home arrangements that can be planned for the comfort, training, and entertainment of young children. They cost little in dollars and cents but contribute much toward the health and happiness of children, and toward the peace of mind of busy mothers.

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